

Lottery Ticket Vending Machines

Comments by Jerry Cox: Family Council President; August 12, News Conference, State Capitol, Little Rock, AR 1:30 p.m.

It is illegal to sell cigarettes or beer out of vending machines, and it should be illegal to sell lottery tickets out of vending machines as well.

We are here today to talk about lottery ticket vending machines. On July 15, the Arkansas Lottery Commission opened a thirty-day comment period regarding lottery ticket vending machines. That comment period ends on Friday the 13th.

A little over 3 weeks ago, we decided to help facilitate the gathering of public comments by posting a comment form on our website located at FamilyCouncil.org. Over the past 3 and one-half weeks, over 1,000 citizens have used our web page to voice their opinions of lottery ticket vending machines.

An overwhelming number of those who responded indicate that they oppose the sale of lottery tickets through vending machines. In fact, over 97% of people using our online comment form indicated that they oppose lottery ticket vending machines.

At the close of business yesterday, 1,164 people opposed lottery ticket vending machines and only 30 supported them. Some people might say that this just represents comments from Family Council supporters, but that's not true, 574 comments, nearly half, came from citizens who are not on our mailing list. The availability of our comments website was announced on the radio. It was featured in TV news stories and it was forwarded on from one e-mail address to another.

Here on the table are those comments, both for and against the machines. At 2:30 p.m. today, we plan to hand-deliver all these public comments to the Arkansas Lottery Commission.

The Arkansas Lottery Commission has a choice. They can run roughshod over all these people who oppose lottery ticket vending machines, or they can take this public comment seriously, listen to the people, and put these machines on hold until the legislature can deal with this issue in January.

Members of the press are welcome to look at the comments here on the table. We've also attached a few of what we thought were more interesting comments to your news release.

Our map here indicates where the comments came from. Each of these cities and towns had at least one person who commented. Obviously Little Rock and other larger cities had numerous comments. As you can see, citizens from almost every county weighed in on this issue.

As most people know, we have opposed the lottery from the beginning and we oppose lottery ticket vending machines. Family Council opposes lottery ticket vending machines for two primary reasons.

First, they will increase underage gambling. That's why states like South Carolina have banned lottery ticket vending machines.

Second, they will cause gambling addicts to gamble even more. The anonymity of a machine makes it more likely that a person addicted to gambling would spend more money on lottery tickets than they should.

People might ask what's our next move: Well, we've already made it. About an hour ago, we delivered letters to the Arkansas Lottery Commission asking for a public hearing on the change to the commission rules which authorizes the lottery ticket vending machines. Arkansas law says that if at least 25 people request a public hearing that a public hearing must be held to give citizens an opportunity to voice their opinions.

We look forward to a public hearing in which we can more fully discuss the pros and cons of lottery ticket vending machines. It will be up to the Arkansas Lottery Commission to notify us and the public in general as to the time and place of the public hearing. At that hearing we plan to present additional information as to why lottery ticket vending machines are a bad idea for Arkansas. As I have said before, it is illegal to sell cigarettes or beer out of vending machines. It should be illegal to sell lottery tickets out of machines as well.